



Rocky Flats Nuclear Bomb Plant

via pacis Special Issue

(the way of peace)
Des Moines Catholic Worker
Volume 2 number 5
June, 1978
Special Rocky Flats issue

Resist nuclear madness!

Well, summer's here. And that means it's time for our "resistance" (to nuclear madness) edition of *via pacis*. Last summer it was Frank at the Pentagon. This summer Edson and Jack went to New York for the Disarmament Rally on May 27 and Frank and I went to Rocky Flats for civil disobedience on April 29 and ended up staying 6 weeks.

This issue is devoted then to giving you a closer look through personal observations of these events. We tried to make it as brief as possible. Given, however, the fact that there really is so much to write about and the fact that we could only expand our newsletter so much, forgive us if information gaps occur. Please note that all of us are available to come speak to your group or organization about our experiences. We've included the journal of a name that may not be familiar to you. Robert Ellsberg is not a staff member at our house, but is nevertheless connected to us through the same blood that runs through all the veins of Catholic Workers. He is a staff member at First St. in New York (the first Catholic Worker founded) and is the former editor of their Catholic Worker newspaper. He is also as you will see, an extremely gifted writer. We included parts of his letters here to share with you his jail experience which he went through on a 16-day fast. Included also is his court statement which brought many tears and a standing ovation from a packed spectator stand.

My statement to the court is included in this issue and I hope you think we forgot Frank's (you must know by now how long-winded he is), we should note that Frank merely read the Lord's Prayer to the judge when asked for final comments. (Tis a gift to be simple). We might note that our own Steve Marsden, the traveling protestor, is presently at Seabrook as is Jerry McMann newly employed at Nat'l Catholic Rural Life Conference. They will have new anti-nuke news when they return.

Do you like special editions of our newsletter such as this? Let us know. We will take it into consideration next summer when the resistance edition comes due.

Why do we feel getting involved in the anti-nuclear campaign is important? Chip,

a great guy we met out at Rocky Flats summed it up well when explaining why he had come to protest. It's like an ostrich, he said "there's only 6 inches difference from burying your head in the sand and kissing your ass goodbye, and I want to go standing up!"

Discussions

The liturgy is celebrated every Friday at the house (713 Indiana, one block north of University) beginning at 8 p.m., followed by a discussion.

June 23: Evangelization; Tom Cordaro. Tom, a lay campus minister at Iowa State University, is actively involved in the charismatic renewal.

June 30: No discussion. The liturgy will be followed by a going away party for Fr. John Zeitler, who will be leaving our community to join the Glenmary fathers in Appalachia.

July 7: The Importance of the U.N. Disarmament Hearings and Demonstrations; Jack Smith.

Dubbed by some as the "second covenant of the modern peace movement," the meeting of peace people in New York last month was an important one for post Vietnam peace activism. See p. 19 for more information.

July 14: Amnesty International; Dennis Steele. Amnesty International won the Nobel Peace Prize earlier this year. Dennis will bring us up to date on the newly formed Des Moines chapter.

July 21: Seabrook, 1978; Jerry McMann. Jerry will be part of the demonstration at Seabrook later this month, and will report to us on the action and the effect.

July 28: Catholics and the ERA; Natalie Reese. Natalie, director of Catholic Social Action for the diocese and the Women's Resource Center, will report on this summer's conference.

via pacis is published by the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, Box 4551, Des Moines, Iowa 50306. Tel (515) 243-0765. Subscriptions are free upon request. Community: Frank Cordaro, Joe Da Via, Jacquee Dickey, Betty Goodnough, Tim Heller, Ed Polich, John Smith, and John Zeitler.

via pacis

LOCAL HAZARD GLOBAL THREAT

Rocky Flats is a nuclear weapons facility located 16 miles northwest of Denver, Colorado. It was constructed by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1952 without consenting citizens in the surrounding communities. It wasn't until 1955 that residents were informed discreetly that they had a nuclear weapons plant in their backyard.

Presently under the management of Rockwell International, Rocky Flats manufactures plutonium triggers for nuclear warheads at an estimated average of ten per day. Rocky Flats fabricates plutonium components not only for nuclear, but thermonuclear weapons, which are one thousand times more powerful than the bomb we dropped on Hiroshima. These "triggers" are not as one would think similar to the fingerpiece of a gun; but rather an actual replica of the bomb used to exterminate Nagasaki, Japan in 1945. After they are made, they are then shipped for final assembly out-of-state. Up until a few years ago the Hanger-Silas and Mason plant in Burlington, Iowa was one of the places where final assembly took place.

In addition to producing nuclear triggers, Rocky Flats also recycles plutonium in old weapons. Old weapons from U.S. bases around the globe travel back to the plant at Rocky Flats. As a consequence, a lot of plutonium is being transported through populated areas by truck, air, and rail, thus exposing larger numbers of people to high level risks in case of accident.

The plant itself has posed dangerous threats, as it has a questionable safety record. Since it opened, 200 fires have occurred, releasing plutonium, americium, and tritium into the air, water and soil outside the plant boundaries. Drums of radioactive waste corroded and leaked 86 grams of plutonium on Rocky Flats grounds. It was not immediately discovered. Another major contamination occurred 5 years ago when a large amount of radioactive tritium, plutonium and other toxic substances was released into the Great Western Reservoir which is the water supply for the city of Broomfield. It was not detected until several months later.

One year ago the Jefferson County Health Dept. Director, Carl Johnson found in soil tests in a 20-mile radius of the plant, that plutonium levels had reached as high as 3,390 times background level. Johnson



suggests this amount would raise risks of leukemia by 160 deaths per million and birth defects by 10%.

The choice of location when Rocky Flats was built was a disastrous one. Not only is the plant near a large metropolitan population, it is also found to be in an area where winds can blow in excess of 100 m.p.h. toward the Denver area. In a study done by the Rocky Flats Action group, balloons were released from the plant and found as far east as Indiana. It was also disclosed through the Colorado Geological Survey recently that the plant is located on a potentially active geological earthquake fault.

In order to understand just why these threats at Rocky Flats are so dangerous one must have a basic understanding of plutonium. Named after Pluto, the god of Hell, plutonium certainly lives up to its name. Plutonium is the deadliest substance known to humans. For more details on how plutonium affects the human body, there are excerpts from Dr. Helen Caldicott, a pediatrician, in Jacquee's statement to the court on p. 15 of this newsletter.

It is clear on many levels that Rocky Flats is not only a local hazard, but also a global threat. The Governor of Colorado has said that it is not a question of IF Rocky Flats is closed down, but WHEN it is closed.

continued on p.4

continued from p.3
ROCKY FLATS ACTION

The Rocky Flats Action Group was formed four years ago to help make the Governor's statement a reality. Their goals were to work for disarmament, to close Rocky Flats as a weapons facility, to work for economic conversion to reemploy workers at the plant, and to end international nuclear weapons and technology proliferation. A demonstration was held at Rocky Flats on April 29th. 6,000 people came from all over the U.S. and several foreign countries. One of the events of the rally was a civil disobedience action of 150 people who trespassed onto government property to occupy overnight the railroad tracks to block further shipments of plutonium. The following day after no arrests had been made, a group of 35 decided to remain on the tracks. They named themselves "Rocky Flats Truth Force" taken from Gandhi's word "satyagraha" which means "clinging to the truth through non-violent action".

Get Active or Get Radioactive

THE TRUTH FORCE STORY

The Truth Force camped on the tracks for six days before arrests came. We were all charged with state violations: criminal trespass and obstruction a public passageway, issued summons' to appear in court, and released. On Sunday, regrouped with new people, we forged over a fence and onto the tracks in two feet of snow. We camped off the tracks that night and were arrested the next evening at 6:00 as we literally halted an incoming train. That night several new people sat on the tracks in two different spots stopping another train twice in the dark. Bail was set at advisements for second offenders, the rest were released on personal recognizance. One person chose to remain in jail.

The next occupation occurred on Wednesday. The Truth Force was arrested within hours of arriving and high bails were set for everyone. (Several at \$5,000) Thus all but four chose to remain in jail till arraignment. Among those now in jail, were 2 Catholic Workers from the New York House: Brian Terrill and Robert Ellsberg, and another New York Catholic, Mark Carver. (Segments of Robert's jail letters are printed in this issue).

The fourth occupation began with an ecumenical

worship service on the tracks with 200 people attending. It being Mother's Day as well as Pentecost Sunday, we found the theme of women's gifts to be appropriate. (After all the original translation from the Bible of "spirit" is in the feminine gender). We prayed to our first Mother, the Earth: "We confess . . . that we have not revered your rhythms, nor listened to your song. We repent of filling your womb with weapons and hereafter promise to impregnate you with seeds of life."

Following the service, 30 camped the night under the stars (our first night of good weather). This occupation of the Truth Force endured for 9½ days before a morning train arrived. Everyone was arrested as they sat in the train's path in rows singing. Five repeat offenders were jailed and the rest were released.

THE CHURCH WAS THERE

The fifth arrest was a group of 9 Christians of varying denominations. Included were Lutheran, Presbyterian, a Mennonite minister and one of his parishoners, a Methodist seminary graduate, Church of the Brethren, 2 Catholic nuns (Mercy and Loretto orders) and a Catholic Worker (myself).

We were carrying statements from the hierarchy of our own denominations on disarmament and nuclear weapons. As we negotiated with Rockwell security, we were told that they didn't know how to handle Church people. "We're equipped to handle terrorists, not people like you!" Proof of the power of non-violence in a Christian witness.

The Church was also present at Rocky Flats in other ways. A group of four, including Frank and myself, delivered a prayer at the ecumenical Governor's Breakfast given in honor of President Carter in Denver. We had asked permission to deliver the prayer and were denied. We leafleted 800 copies of our prayer to those at the breakfast before hand. Moved by the Spirit's grace, we stood in the audience as Carter ended his address and began praying. The two men in our group were dragged off: the first by Secret Service, and Frank by an irate pastor who pounded him like an expert mugger. Jean then continued on with the prayer until someone confiscated it from her hands. I

continued on p.5

via pacis

Prison journal of a Catholic Worker

Sunday, May 14, 1978

Beloved sisters and brothers-

What can I say to you? As the saying goes jail is kind of a home for the poor--in here are mostly folks who can't hire a good lawyer or make bail. We are locked up all day in semi-darkness, nothing to read, can't move because the floor in our cell is covered with bodies and mattresses. Constant noise. And still, there is remarkable cooperation and mutual aid between prisoners, sharing of "resources," magazines, etc. Prisons do not make people better; they make people worse. They build little prisons inside of us. Which is to say jails themselves constitute a crime, a devastation of human goodness, trust, dignity. And so I have chosen not to cooperate in several ways: I have refused to submit to rectal searches; I explained that I would not allow the guards to define the limits of my freedom and dignity. I said I believed that this system was degrading to guards as well as prisoners, and that by

continued from p.4

was undisturbed in completing the prayer: "...We invite you to join with us in a prayer of repentance, remembering the words of Chronicles: 'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land'."

"We pray the prayer of hope of the prophet Isaiah: 'they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks'."

The Catholic Church made several visible actions on behalf of protestors at Rocky Flats. Archbishop Casey sent a pastoral letter to his diocese which you can read elsewhere in this issue. St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Boulder opened its doors for hospitality to those working support for the Truth Force the first week. Later it loaned the Truth Force its religious education house for summer headquarters. The diocesan Justice and Peace Office led by Aquinas Dominican Father Jerry Stookey was one of the original organizers for Rocky Flats Action Group. This is not to mention the numerous other clergy and lay Catholics who not only supported, but also participated at Rocky Flats on various levels.

June, 1978

insisting on my freedom, my sense of myself as a responsible human being, I was trying to return the same to them as well. For this I was locked in solitary for about 8 hours Friday night.

I am now in my third day of refusing food and water. I am trying to show that we are involved in a life and death struggle. The price of peace will be paid in our hearts and souls. And I am showing my jailors as best I can, that they are mistaken in believing that because my body is captive that they can imprison my soul. I am feeling weak in flesh, but ultimately strong. Each sacrifice that we offer bears fruit in time. I am sharing now in your gift of Spirit. My fast is a prayer for peace. Each heart-beat--and they are coming faster--is another gift to you--a gift of hope in what you are doing--which is buying time for humanity and life. We must be willing to pay that price.

My soul is in God's hands. She will provide. Together we shall open the bars of the nuclear prison.

Yours with love,
Robert

Monday A.M. May 15, 1978

Beloved,

Greetings from the House of the Dead, where there is no sky, no trees, no children or other growing things. I would revise an earlier impression. So long as one isn't causing trouble, the guards can be quite decent--they seem hurried and overworked. And yet the prisoners are also decent toward one another. I prefer their company. The tragedy of our time is that by obedience to authority and "conventional" morality, decent, thoughtful people are implicated in a process that may ultimately prove criminal, if not also suicidal. The court is deeply implicated in that process. I have written a letter to our judge explaining some of my feelings and describing his jail and my neighbors here. What alienation it must be to spend one's life consigning human beings to conditions one is unable or unwilling to experience and understand. One's sense of solidarity with the human condition must corrode; meaning not only the capacity to identify with the

continued on p. 6

continued from p.5

suffering, but joy, love itself. I explained my fast to him, and other things--why I will not stand for him in court. He is not his robe and gavel any more than I am these prison clothes I wear. I would stand out of respect for any person, but I will not stand to respect the guns and bars which he speaks in every decision. I have a new set of neighbors. A couple of Chicanos, an Indian, a crusty Ahab of a scurmudgeon, challenging the guards to "take him on man for man." They are waiting to see a judge, or they cannot raise bail. Anatole France says, "the law in its majesty forbids equally, rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, to steal bread." One of my neighbors put it in the vernacular: "life is a shit sandwich--the more bread you have, the less shit you eat." So it goes...

Your brother in chains--
Robert

Wednesday afternoon, May 17, 1978

Dear Ones,

...We must not hold onto the "high" we feel when we are together, as if this were the end in itself, nor the number of busts we take, as if we needed these to justify our sense of righteousness, a proof of our radicalness, our salvation from the structural sin in which we are all implicated. We must remember to be modest always. We have a critical job ahead of us: we are dust. The real power is in the still small voice that speaks to us in the wind. We must remember to be patient. We will not accomplish our task in one month or one year. It will not consist of closing Rocky Flats, that is only a beginning. Our job is to live humbly, to live deeply, to walk faithfully with the truth. It will take all our lives. What will matter is that we don't look back on our lives 10 or 20 years from now and ask, "Where did my life go, what did I do with these years?"

We must remember to celebrate. We are angry, yes, with good reason, but love harnesses that anger and transforms it into a constructive force. Like the prophets, we must speak the hard word--but like them our words come not from pride, desperation, frustration--but from deep love for the people--the pain in their breast is ours--the cancer in our political and moral universe is the sound of our own hearts breaking.

Why do Christians "celebrate the Eucharist"--celebrate the last evening our Comrade

Jesus spent with his friends before he was taken by the state and executed? Because when we remember his revolutionary love, we put his body back together again within ourselves. We must always celebrate! On railroad tracks, in a jail cell--we have so few victories, really we must learn to celebrate our defeats. Remember to be light--as Chesterton says: angels can fly because they take themselves so lightly. Take ourselves lightly, take our task with the seriousness it deserves--as if our lives depended on it--for they surely do. Keep your eyes on the road. Hang on. I love you, I am with you--together we shall be victorious. Venceremos!

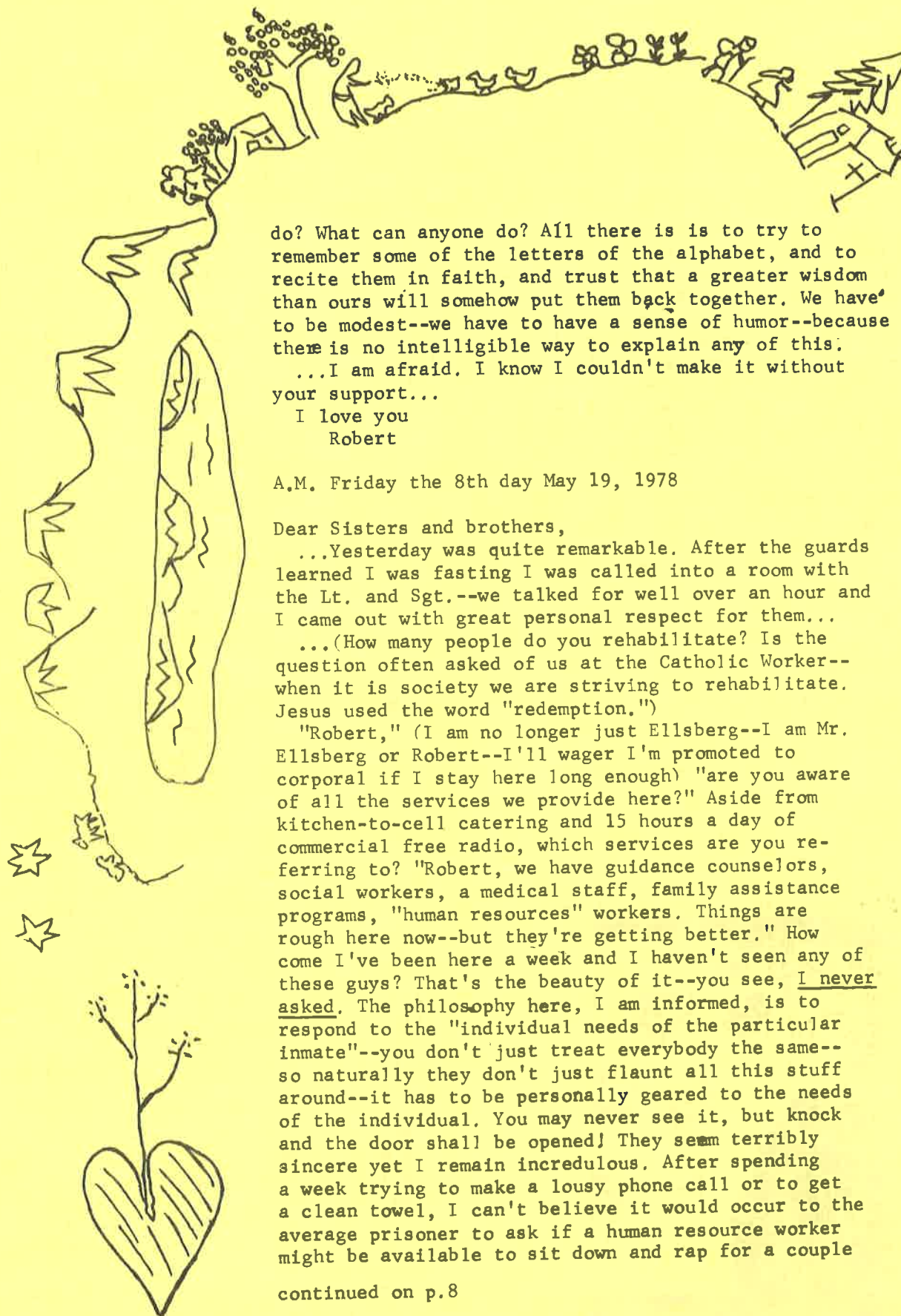
Robert

A.M. Thursday--the 7th Day, May 18, 1978

...Yesterday lots of people thanked me for my "strength"--they don't know that I am a person of very little strength and endurance and little faith. I am wracked with doubts, self-recrimination; insecurity. I am at a crossroads in my life, afraid to trust myself to the light. I am afraid of the light, and of love. I know I carry within myself the personal equivalent of Rocky Flats. But we all are stumbling in the dark to one extent or another. In one of my favorite Hassidic tales, it is the night of the Passover. A peasant is rushing to finish his work in the fields so he can attend to the holy service. But alas, the sun drops and it is darkness when no travel is permitted. The next day the Rabbi spots him and asks why he had missed the service. "I was stuck in my fields after dark, Rabbi, and I had to spend the evening there." "Well," said the Rabbi-- "I suppose you at least recited your prayers." "That is the worst of it, Rabbi: I couldn't remember a single prayer." "Then how did you spend this holy evening?" asked the Rabbi. "I could only recite the alphabet and pray that God would re-arrange the letters."

We are the same. We are in a dark age, the light has dried up and we seem utterly helpless, ineffective, and lost. We are not saints--we are not even particularly holy people--I, for one, am painfully aware of my wretchedness, my total unsuitability for the urgent task that is before us, in which we, by some mysterious grace, have been invited to participate. And so what can we

via pacis



do? What can anyone do? All there is is to try to remember some of the letters of the alphabet, and to recite them in faith, and trust that a greater wisdom than ours will somehow put them back together. We have to be modest--we have to have a sense of humor--because there is no intelligible way to explain any of this.

...I am afraid. I know I couldn't make it without your support...

I love you
Robert

A.M. Friday the 8th day May 19, 1978

Dear Sisters and brothers,

...Yesterday was quite remarkable. After the guards learned I was fasting I was called into a room with the Lt. and Sgt.--we talked for well over an hour and I came out with great personal respect for them...

...(How many people do you rehabilitate? Is the question often asked of us at the Catholic Worker--when it is society we are striving to rehabilitate. Jesus used the word "redemption.")

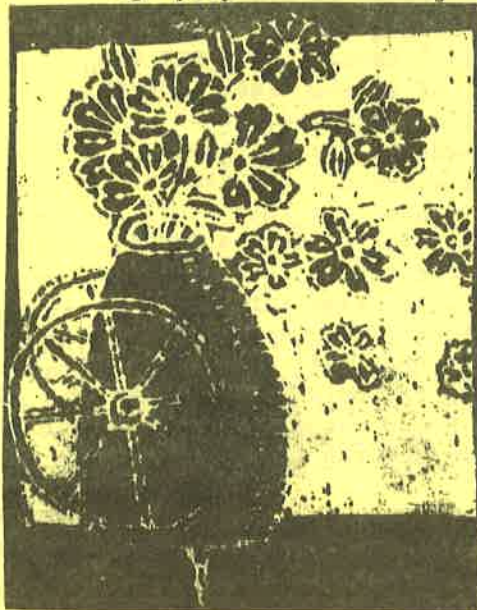
"Robert," (I am no longer just Ellsberg--I am Mr. Ellsberg or Robert--I'll wager I'm promoted to corporal if I stay here long enough) "are you aware of all the services we provide here?" Aside from kitchen-to-cell catering and 15 hours a day of commercial free radio, which services are you referring to? "Robert, we have guidance counselors, social workers, a medical staff, family assistance programs, "human resources" workers. Things are rough here now--but they're getting better." How come I've been here a week and I haven't seen any of these guys? That's the beauty of it--you see, I never asked. The philosophy here, I am informed, is to respond to the "individual needs of the particular inmate"--you don't just treat everybody the same--so naturally they don't just flaunt all this stuff around--it has to be personally geared to the needs of the individual. You may never see it, but knock and the door shall be opened! They seem terribly sincere yet I remain incredulous. After spending a week trying to make a lousy phone call or to get a clean towel, I can't believe it would occur to the average prisoner to ask if a human resource worker might be available to sit down and rap for a couple

continued on p.8

from p.7

hours.

We talked of jails--they admit that jails solve no problems but are only an emergency treatment of symptoms--they could not deny that most inmates are poor, gain nothing from this experience, probably will commit more serious crimes in the future, that jails hold only a small portion of those convicted, who represent in turn a small portion of those apprehended, who represent a smaller portion of crimes committed. They said probably at least 30% of all prisoners don't belong in jail at all (the Sgt.'s estimate). Asked for a solution I sketched a plan that would include immediate moratorium on prison construction, closing of all substandard facilities, massive reductions in sentences; the enormous wealth saved could go into counseling, job training and community alternatives to jail (I tried to show analogies between such a program and a reasonable disarmament program--significant unilateral actions that could be taken without in fact jeopardizing "national security interests"). But I would not start with prisons if I were suddenly given power to remake this country. How can you spend billions on prisons and a pittance on the social development needed to prevent crime? Prisons are only one aspect of a society that has no coherent notion of what human life is for--so obviously all attempts at "correction, rehabilitation" fall flat because they are rehabilitating people into an unjust world



and considering crime only as an individual problem and not, correctly, as a social problem, susceptible, in the end, only to social correction. Society is too big--the velocity of life is too fast, too impersonal. You have to be a "professional" just to cope. And the system pushes those who can't make it (those whom it is more profitable for the system to ignore than to usefully employ) out to the margins where they are absorbed in ghettos, welfare, drugs and jail. Here the Lt. became excited and I began to feel like we were in some kind of Chekov play: the intellectual bureaucrat, frustrated in his provincial assignment, discovers a naive but articulate serf on his estate. "You want to know what I think the problem is?" A pregnant pause. "The breakdown of the family--this country was founded by the American family, and all our problems have arisen out of its decay." When did this breakdown begin? "It's been happening since the beginning of time." You mean we've got to recover the social organization that we enjoyed a million years ago? I am incredulous and even the Sgt. shifts in his chair with apparent embarrassment (he doesn't get into the philosophical drift of the discussion)--he seems reluctant to challenge his superior but when I ask whether it doesn't make more sense to say the family breakdown is not the cause but the effect of a materialistic social order that is equally responsible for the ecological, moral and spiritual crisis of our age, he quickly tags on, "the social system, of course."

We talked about jails; the Sgt. says, "You need more than average compassion in this job--it wouldn't be worth it for the money--but you also have to be a professional because you see so much suffering and human misery that if you didn't keep detached you would be overwhelmed. You couldn't function." (I restrain myself from asking how much of his "functioning" is responsible for the suffering around him, that does seem overwhelming.) Thinking of Simone Weil's line about compassion: that it is being in two places at once. But which part, which place is more important to protect--which makes us more human? I admit it is a difficult problem.

I share my experience at the Catholic

via pacis

Worker and life on the Bowery, where one practically steps over bodies on one's way to work. If one did as we are told in the story of the Good Samaritan there would be no end to it. But the answer doesn't seem to me to be more professionalism--my experience with social workers is that they do not serve--they service--they lose respect for the people they work with. They begin with idealism and compassion, they discover that they can't help everybody, and they begin to feel guilty, and finally they secretly hate the people they service for making them "feel bad." I know that I could not expose myself to such brokenness for the sake of professionalism, idealism, or as a 9-5 job--only true compassion makes it possible, which is not sentimental bad feelings, but active faith; not a virtue but a gift of grace. I explained my fast--not a hunger strike, I insisted. They said I had their complete respect...

...My lungs are filled with the sweetness of life. I feel strangely that I have been selected out for some unknown purpose. How strange that I should be in the one group to end up in the slammer, the only one kept here, and now put in solitary--we understand so little. Solitude is hard for me and so perhaps I am being forged for some task, stripped and tested.

The way of nonviolence is a humbling, reducing ourselves in action to the point where the Truth speaks through us, an obscurity so small that the wind and the dust could bury us.

I feel much better today, physically that is. Tentatively--I am now half way through my time, another eight days to go. Plants can live almost forever on light and water (as Simone Weil says, a tree is actually rooted in the sky). There is so little light here. What is the spiritual equivalent of chlorophyll that allows us to receive love and transform it into the material of life?

My friends, so precious to this prisoner--
Be well--till soon.

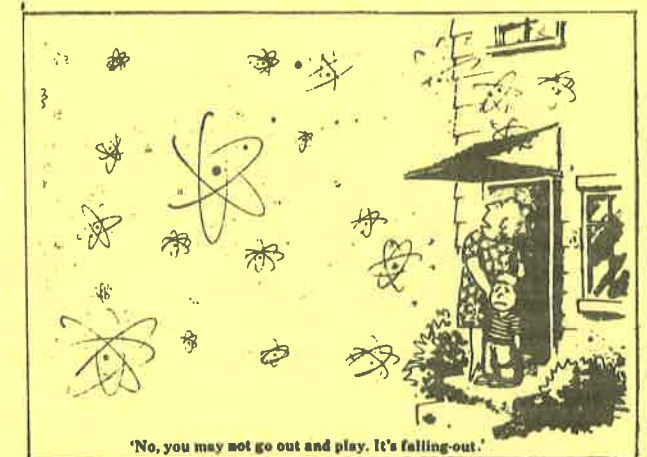
Robert.

Saturday A.M. the ninth day May 20, 1978

Dear friends,

...I made friends with the chef here (head of "food management"). "I understand you're
June, 1978

fasting?" "Yes, nothing personal you understand." "Of course not" (You see what civilized discourse one can enjoy here'. He is a Catholic and interested in my views on jail and alternatives. He says, "The way I see it, jail is nothing but a warehouse"--"But a warehouse is for things," I say, "and when you take a thing out, it's the same as when you put it in. But when you put a person into a warehouse, I maintain that he or she is not the same when you take them out--my question is, are they



Credit: Auth/NY WSP Newsletter/LNS

better or are they worse?" We talked of the story of Jonah, the serious-browed prophet who rebelled against God's order to warn the people of Ninevah of the destruction that would follow their sin--Jonah wanted Ninevah to get what it deserved. It deserved no warning. But after being delivered there against his will, Jonah delivered the warning and the people made a miraculous conversion--they fasted, put on ashes and sackcloth and prayed for forgiveness and God showed them mercy. Even the most rebellious society can be spared the logical consequences of their actions and change their ways. And in this cage, we are like Jonah, carried against our will, our narrow understanding, our meager faith, to God's will for us, buried somehow in the belly of an absurd paradox. We will feel dry land again.

Robert

continued on p.12

Another Holocaust ?

Office of the Archbishop
P.O. Box 1620
200 Josephine Street
Denver, Colorado 80201

April 24, 1978

Dear Family in Christ,

Concerned citizens from various parts of our country and the world are planning a peaceful demonstration at Rocky Flats, Colorado on April 29-30. Personally, I am not very fond of demonstrations but I do share their concern about the real dangers of nuclear war and radioactive contamination. For this reason, I am asking the Catholic people of Northern Colorado to consider the authentic teachings of their church and to review a few recent statements relevant to our present situation.

In 1962, Pope John XXIII said: "Justice, right reason and humanity urgently demand that the arms race should cease; that the stockpiles which exist in various Countries should be reduced equally and simultaneously by the parties concerned; that nuclear weapons should be banned." (Pacem in Terris, #112)

At the Second Vatican Council, the Bishops of the World wrote this: "The horror and perversity of war are immensely magnified by the multiplication of scientific weapons. For acts of war involving these weapons can inflict massive and indiscriminate destruction far exceeding the bounds of legitimate defense... Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire Cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation." (Gaudium et Spes, #80)

In 1976, the Bishops of the

United States wrote: "The Church has traditionally recognized, under stringent conditions, engaging in war can be a form of legitimate defense. But modern warfare, in both its technology and its execution, is so savage that one must ask whether war as it is actually waged today can be morally justified... The right of legitimate defense is not a moral justification for unleashing every form of destruction... With respect to nuclear weapons, at least those with massive destruction capacity, the first imperative is to prevent their use." ("To Live in Christ Jesus")

Pope Paul in 1976 wrote a message for World Peace Day, and he said: "Let ill-fated and dishonorable arms, such as atomic weapons, be proscribed. Let the terrible art which can manufacture them and store them to terrorize people be outlawed. We pray that the deadly device may not have killed peace while seeking it."

And later, he called the entire armaments race which is draining the resources of the World, "...a danger, an injustice, a violation of law, a form of theft, a mistake, a wrong, a folly."

In a recent book, entitled: "Ethics and Nuclear Strategy?", Father Francis D. Winters, S.J., states that the traditional rules for a just war do not apply to the nuclear situation. In fact, he feels that the words "weapons" and "war" should be abandoned in speaking of nuclear conflict because the development of military technology in the last 30 years has so transformed the instruments of war that they require new names to represent a new reality.

This author represents a group of respected moralists who are not passivists but they tell us that any use or even threat of us of nuclear weapons is immoral because

these weapons are intrinsically uncontrollable and have massive, deadly consequences. Father Winters writes: "We need adequate military strength to defend human, cultural and political values that have been achieved thus far in the process of human development. Yet, we cannot any longer afford the illusion that nuclear "weapons" provide such security."

In asking you to consider these statements, I am deeply sensitive to the fact that some 3000 people gain their livelihood at Rocky Flats. For them, the goals of the planned demonstration at Rocky Flats pose a threat to their daily needs and no one can fault them for their fears and concerns. Every person and institution which supports this demonstration at Rocky Flats can do no less than to fight for a transition of this facility that includes financial security for the workers and their families.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the current situation is the fatalistic trance that has paralyzed large numbers of us. We pretend that we are powerless and so we seem to merely wait for the inevitable. We are living in a state of nuclear emergency that threatens human existence. We need to awaken from our trance and send a message to our leaders: "Start working for a safe and peaceful future."

Why do I ask you to consider the statements which contain the authentic teachings of our Church? The Catholic Church is the oldest Christian guide in moral behavior on the face of the earth; and, it clearly teaches that nuclear warfare is immoral because it is a direct contradiction of its Founder's Teachings who said He came that we might have life and have it to the full. Essential parts of nuclear weapons are being constructed in our Community, and we share in the responsibility for the

via pacis

June, 1978



danger it represents to all who live in our global village.

In preparing this statement, I make no pretensions. I am not a mover or a shaker of World opinion. We must rely on our leaders to send our message to Russia and China and other nuclear powers. We have to start somewhere; and, you and I can at least serve as starters. Our voice may be heard as one crying in the wilderness of a people who seem to be silently and stoically resigned to the inevitability of a nuclear holocaust.

Those of you who watched all or a part of the 9½ hour T.V. documentary drama The Holocaust last

week will remain deeply disturbed by the incredible inhumanity that took place in our generation. If only we could erase this shameful chapter from the record of human history but we cannot. However, the spectre of another and perhaps more shameful holocaust has appeared on the horizon of the present day. We dare not stand idly by when the possibility of a nuclear massacre threatens our Community, our Country and our World.

Your brother in Christ,

James V. Casey
Archbishop of Denver

continued from p. 9

Sunday A.M. the tenth day May 21, 1978

...At Nuremburg the principle was established that obedience, following orders, rules, laws, regulations, does not absolve us from accountability for our actions. Judge Goldberger said, "I am only a servant of the court." That's no good anymore. The time has come when the ethical precepts of the Gospel, the ethic of indiscriminate love, has become a practical imperative. We can serve nothing less than the entire web

of life which has patiently nursed and nourished us for too long. I have hope. Because I believe there must be, somewhere deep inside of us, buried under the encrustations of state, authority, and a hundred repressive institutions, perhaps encoded in our very DNA molecules, a memory of the unity of life and an urge to rediscover it. And I am happy in this dark cell, because I know that on the outside there are people who share my hope and are willing to pay the price to make it real.

Robert.

Statement to the Court: May 27, 1978

I live in a community in New York called the Catholic Worker, which was begun 45 years ago. And the message of the Catholic Worker could perhaps be summarized by saying that faith and action cannot be separated. If we are made in God's image, then each life is holy and precious and endowed with purpose. If God in love took on our humanity and gave His life for us, then our lives belong to our brothers and sisters; to free them from hunger and suffering and oppression. Each person bears God's image and so to love God means to feed our neighbors when they are hungry, shelter them when they are homeless--not to kill them, not to hurt them. And indeed Jesus said what we do to the least of his brethren, we do directly to him.

And so the Catholic Worker consists of houses of hospitality in poor--often skid-row--areas around the country that offer shelter, clothing and food to those in need. And we believe we must go further--we try as best we can to withdraw from and resist the forces, institutions and values in our society responsible for war, for the poverty, injustice and oppression we see around us. For we believe that the Gospel teaches us that we must each of us take personal responsibility for the conditions we find around us, and equally, the task of building a new world. And more than this: no change, no new life ever comes unless some one, or some people, voluntarily accept to pay the price through personal sacrifice.

Our world is now facing an unprecedented crisis--we are living in an age that is absolutely unique--an age in which we have developed the capacity to destroy all life on earth. And each of our actions must take on and reflect the special nature and the urgency of this moment. For we are now all implicated in the possibility of an un-

precedented holocaust. Whether it comes by accident or design, the effect will be the same--and it will be the result not so much of our evil hearts, our insanity, our suicidal pride--but simply our complacency, our tepid imaginations and our deep fears.

The Catholic Church has stated that the arms race is to be "condemned unreservedly"--describing it as a wrong, a folly, a crime, a sin, and a "machine gone mad." We are here because we have tried to use our bodies as a physical brake on that machine--trying to give humanity a moment's respite, and to give to the American people something we've never had: the realization that we as a people can and must make decisions for ourselves about the most fundamental issue concerning our future and our survival. For 35 years of nuclear history, entirely in secret, essentially outside of any public discussion, our leaders have consigned us to a road that is leading to Hell. I believe they have not served the interests of the American people, nor the interests of humanity.

By sitting on railroad tracks at Rocky Flats--one dozen, two dozen, even a hundred people--we ourselves may not actually be able to stop the production of plutonium triggers there. But we are trying to show that we as a people, if we wish and if we are determined, have that power--the power to change ourselves and history--we as a people can close Rocky Flats, and in fact that is what we must do. It would mean not building any new nuclear weapons--as we are currently doing at the rate of three a day--not adding new weapons to our stockpile of 30,000 warheads. We do not deny that the goal of the world-wide disarmament is a complicated one and filled with risks--but it is time that we begin accepting the risks of

via pacis

peacemaking as we have for so long lived under the risks of war. Closing Rocky Flats would only be the beginning of our work. But we believe it is a logical beginning, and it is an absolutely necessary place to begin.

Perhaps I didn't need to come to Colorado to say this--to say that peace will come when we will translate our faith into action. I could have stayed home and written a letter to my congressman, I could have collected signatures on a petition. I could be saying all this from the comfort and security of my own apartment, having just enjoyed a delicious breakfast and looking forward to an even more delicious lunch.

Instead I am speaking to you now having spent 16 days as a guest in your county jail. Nine days of that time in solitary confinement, which is a six-by-six foot concrete cage with no bed, chair, light, window, toilet or sink. I speak to you after having fasted for 16 days. For 16 days I have eaten no food.

And I am grateful to the court for this. I am grateful to the court for allowing me the opportunity to dramatize in such a small way the life and death seriousness of the matter that brings us here today.

And now I face a possible year in jail. From what has happened this morning I suspect the court will not be so severe. Perhaps in the future the stakes will be higher for us. But it is a risk I am willing to face. This is not because I enjoy the possibility of being separated from my friends, my family, and those I love; the possibility of being returned to my cage, in which I would not want to put any person. But I am prepared if this is what must be. Because we are living in a dark age, and many men and women will have to face greater risks than these if we are ever to see any light.

And I sincerely hope that for you, judge, as for everyone in this courtroom, there is something, some one, some cause for which you would willingly face these risks. For that is what makes our lives precious and beautiful. Whether we give our lives for freedom, love, peace--or money, power and war--we have it to give only once.

For us, the choice is clear.

Rocky Flats is the Auschwitz of our time. Behind that barbed wire and those locked doors, intelligent, decent, family men in their white suits and their security badges are implementing the technological preparations for the Final Solution to the Human Problem. In each bomb prepared at Rocky Flats is another Holocaust--perhaps for the

June, 1978

children of Moscow, Peking, Hanoi--those who build them don't know.

At one of the German concentration camps--I believe it was Dachau--the American troops who liberated it forced the townspeople to tour the camp--to see the huddled, emaciated survivors, the piles of corpses, the ovens that had disposed of the dead. And of course they were numbed and shocked and they said "we didn't know--we didn't know what was in those boxcars--we didn't know what came out of those chimneys."



We would like to spare the people of this county, this state and our country, that kind of experience--so we are shouting, we are trying to warn the people what kind of cargo goes over those railroad tracks in sealed boxcars and is killing and mutilating your unborn children by increasing levels of cancer, leukemia and genetic mutation--even if the bombs never go off.

And we are doing more than that. There are people right now who are blocking those tracks. There is a group of people--someday they will be thanked, now they are jailed--who are saying, "build your bombs, continue your business as usual in this death camp--but I'm sorry that I must withdraw my consent--you will have to do it over our bodies."

They are saying, no longer should nuclear bombs be made in this country without Americans being arrested. And when I heard that in Colorado there were people who were willing to say this and act on it, I had to come here--because I knew these were people I wanted to know and to join and to be with.

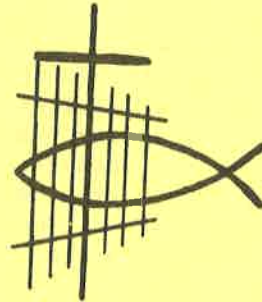
I don't know what you will do with us--I know some face more serious charges. But I must say how very happy and proud I am at this moment. How proud I am to have had a small role in this action. And I thank you for listening so patiently and for helping make it possible for me to be here today in such beautiful company.

Thank you all.

Robert Ellsberg.

Render to Caesar what is Caesar's

Statement made to the court by
Jacquee Dickey at arraignment on the
day of May 27, 1978



When Jesus told his followers to "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17) he was recognizing a higher authority than the State. This was a relatively new concept when one examines many of the ancient civilizations whose power of the state was absolute. Egypt, for example, or Greece in the fourth century before Christ, had the state commanding supreme and imposing authority over every aspect of the personal, social and spiritual life of its citizens.

One may conclude that the idea for the "limited government" we have today was helped in its identity by early Christianity. Limited government means that government should not make pretensions of total power over its people.

At some point in history, government was given a secular role, and the separation between Church and State was declared. People of faith reclaimed through suffering persecution their right to independence from the State's authority in spiritual matters. In that was offered a will to resist the State's demands when the State's demands transgressed God's law.

This is not to say we have a right to indiscriminate lawlessness against the State. However, it does imply that it takes a theory of selective obedience to the State to form a healthy Christian conscience. And it follows that because one cannot expect constant harmony between Church and State, a Christian must maintain a critical independence from Caesar.

In my tradition, the Roman Catholic Church, theologians and moral leaders have given us guidelines by which to test these matters. Jacques Maritain, a French philosopher, says that when the State guarantees the Church religious freedom, the Church is also allowed authority over political matters, because a spiritual principle is involved. And further, we are committing an act of disobedience to the Church we are bound to, by resisting an order given by her "in virtue of Her indirect power over the temporal." Maritain states as does St. Thomas Aquinas, that one may disobey

civil authority in two situations:

- 1) when the common good of the people is subverted
- 2) when the State orders sinful acts to be performed.

Church teachings provide a framework by which to judge the policies, values and goals of the State in these situations. Therefore, I will proceed in this manner to test the validity of my action at Rocky Flats.

The Holy See, the office of the Pope, is the highest authority in the Catholic Church. He interprets doctrines for the Church and issues statements by which we may guide ourselves in living out the gospel of Jesus.

Let me share with you some words of Pope Paul VI on world peace and nuclear weapons:

On January first in 1970, (a day set aside every year in the Catholic Church as a "Day of Peace"):

"We are not on the right path...we have based the development and prosperity of our giant industries on the diabolical capacity to produce arms of every size and shape, all designed to slaughter and exterminate people who are our sisters and brothers. Thus we have cruelly established the economic stability of so many powerful nations upon the trading of arms to poor nations which lack plows, schools and hospitals."

On January 1, 1976:

"If the consciousness of familyhood permeated...would they any longer need to arm themselves and become blind, fanatical murderers of their innocent sisters and brothers, or in the name of peace wreak destruction of unimaginable magnitude as in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945?"

On the 20th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima:

"Let these shameful weapons be banned...
via pacis

and to God what is God's

Now the justice of God has been
manifested apart from the law.

For we hold that a person is justified
by faith apart from observance
of the law.

Romans 3:21, 28

let this terrible art which consists in manufacturing, multiplying and storing bombs to terrorize the people...be outlawed."

To the United Nations in May, 1976:

"It is to be condemned unreservedly. Even when motivated by a concern for legitimate defense, it is in fact, by virtue of the nature of modern weapons and the situation prevailing on our planet; 1) a danger in terms of the possible total or partial use of blackmail, accepted as the norm of relations with other nations. 2) An injustice, for it constitutes...an act of aggression against those who are the victims of it...Which amounts to a crime, for even when they are not used, by their cost alone armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve. 3) a mistake... The conversion of military manufacturing plants and military markets for civilian purposes is equally possible... in that it would create jobs by making it possible to undertake the large scale projects which prove necessary for the protection of the environment, etc. 4) a wrong. Refusal to undertake this conversion "is completely incompatible with the spirit of humanity and still more with the spirit of Christianity" because it is unthinkable that no other work can be found for hundreds of thousands of workers than the production of instruments of death."

5) Folly. This system of international relations based on fear, danger and injustice is a kind of collective hysteria...in the case of nuclear weapons, does not afford any additional security because there is already a surplus of such instruments (overkill)...The church condemns the armaments race."

And James V. Casey, Archbishop of Denver, states:

"...perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the current situation is the fatalistic

June, 1978

trance that has paralyzed large numbers of us. We pretend that we are powerless and so we seem to merely wait for the inevitable. We are living in a state of nuclear emergency that threatens human existence. We need to awaken from our trance and send a message to our leaders: "Start working for a safe and peaceful future."

"Why do I ask you to consider the statements which contain the authentic teaching of our church? The Catholic Church is the oldest Christian guide in moral behavior on the face of our earth; and, it clearly teaches that nuclear warfare is immoral because it is a direct contradiction of its Founders teachings who said he came that we might have life and have it to the full. Essential parts of nuclear weapons are being constructed in our community, and we share in the responsibility for the danger it represents to all who live in our global village..."

Now let's go back to Maritain's criteria for a closer analysis. The first: "When the common good of the people is subverted." Dr. Helen Caldicott, a pediatrician, sights proof in her studies of the biological threat we are all under by the spread of nuclear technology: "...All radiation is dangerous; no radiation is safe."

If you get exposed to little amounts of radiation over your lifetime, it's approximately the same as getting one large dose all at once. In other words, the effects are cumulative. And, of all animals on earth, human beings are the most sensitive to the effects of radiation: we get cancer most easily...And of all human beings, it's fetuses, infants, and young children who are the most sensitive to these effects, because their cells are rapidly dividing and growing. You can see a baby grow, almost literally. It's producing millions and millions of new cells, and the DNA molecules, or genes, are being made and that's when they're especially sensitive to the effects of radiation.

Now, there are various forms of radiation continued on p.16



Rita Corbin

continued from p.15

tion: x-rays, gamma rays, alpha rays, and beta rays. They all do the same thing to the cells. They can all give you cancer, though some of them are more effective than others.

Let's look at four examples of the elements that come out of the nuclear reactor: iodine 131, strontium 90, cesium 137 and plutonium.

Now, the first three elements are what are called beta emitters, and plutonium is an alpha emitter. That means that if you have an atom with the nucleus in the middle and the electrons whizzing around it in orbit on the outside, the beta emitter gives off an electron. Now, if that little particle of radioactive iodine is sitting in your thyroid gland, this particle will irradiate just a few cells surrounding it. It will probably injure some of those cells; it may produce cancer.

The alpha emitter plutonium, on the other hand, emits a helium nucleus, which is a very large particle--and it is of dense matter and doesn't travel very far, less than a beta particle. But if, indeed, it hits a cell, it will probably kill it, and if it doesn't kill it, it will definitely damage it. That's why alpha emitters--and plutonium, in particular--are the most carcinogenic or cancer-producing substances we have ever known. And we created plutonium--it didn't exist before we fissioned uranium.

Now, how does radiation produce cancer? Your body is composed of millions and billions of cells, all of which have a central nucleus which contains genes, the basic inherited material which controls all our characteristics. Genes are changed by radioactive particles. Cells and genes which are actively dividing (as in fetuses and young children) are most susceptible to the effects of radiation. If a gene which controls the rate of cell division is altered by radiation, the cell may divide in an uncontrolled fashion to produce millions and billions of cells. That is a cancer and it may take from 15 to 30 years for it to appear after the cell is exposed to radiation. If a gene in a sperm or egg is altered, a baby may be born with an inherited disease, or may appear normal--but will transmit the damaged gene to future generations, to become manifest in later years.

So if you inhale one atom of plutonium into your lung, and it emits one alpha particle, which damages one cell and one gene, that can kill you, you see.

Plutonium is so toxic that people who've worked with it say they can't find a low enough dose which won't produce lung cancer. Now, that's not normal in medicine. Usually, there's a threshold in a drug, below which it has no effect. It is generally accepted that a millionth of a gram of plutonium will give you

cancer. A gram is a minute amount; a millionth of a gram is something you can't even see. By extrapolation, one pound of plutonium, universally dispersed, would be enough to kill every man, woman and child on this earth. Of course that couldn't happen, but it shows how dangerous it is.

Most of the plutonium manufactured in the fuel cycle will be in powdered form, and by the year 2020 in the U.S., the industry will have produced 30,000 tons of plutonium, and there will be 100,000 shipments of this material annually on the highways of the U.S. There is another even more frightening dimension to this, for plutonium is also the basic material of atom bombs. It must be transported very carefully, packed in small quantities in separate containers because only ten pounds is "critical mass," which means that a spontaneous atomic explosion could occur if ten pounds or more are compacted together into a finite space. That is, it requires only ten pounds of plutonium to build an atomic bomb. Each nuclear reactor produces 400-500 pounds of plutonium every year...

We're talking about a substance that is so incredibly toxic that everybody who comes in contact with it and gets it into their lungs will die of lung cancer. You don't know you've breathed it into your lungs. You can't feel it, or see it, nor can I as a doctor, determine that you've got plutonium in your lungs. And you'll feel healthy for fifteen to twenty or thirty years till one day you get cancer...Plutonium has a half-life of 24,400 years, which means it's not safe for half a million years. And we have not discovered a means for storing it."

Thus it is clear the common good is subverted by the act of possessing nuclear technology. Maritain's second criteria is "When the State orders sinful acts to be performed." Rocky Flats is a weapons facility "ordered" by the federal government to produce the essential trigger components for all nuclear weapons in the United States. It produces three new ones each day to add to our ever-growing stockpile of 30,000. By the Church's moral teaching the exis-

tence of nuclear weapons at all is clearly a sin. Thus the State has indeed "ordered sinful acts to be performed."

It is evident to me that I am being called as a disciple by my Church to literal resistance to the production of these insidious weapons. It is clear also that because of the dangers of plutonium, the urgency of this matter deems immediate non-violent resistance to continued production of nuclear weapons.

By placing my body upon the railroad tracks into Rocky Flats, I incarnate in flesh this truth-witness, just as Jesus did with his body upon the cross. I will live out the words of Pope Paul: "If you want peace, defend life." I will use my body in a non-violent way to resist this demonic threat to all existing life. I say this plant will no longer make nuclear weapons with my consent.

I am entering a "no contest" plea because I believe the court will see my act as one of civil disobedience and punish me according to the court's law. I welcome the chance to pay this price. I see my actions, however, as Divine Obedience to higher authority and a fulfillment of Jesus' words: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." I am rendering to Caesar today by being present in this court room for your sentencing. But I have already rendered to God the truth of my faith by my actions at Rocky Flats.

Rocky Flats Update

Arraignment was held May 27. Thirteen entered "no contest" pleas (including Frank and myself), one entered a guilty plea and were sentenced to 8 months unsupervised probation. The remaining members of the Truth Force entered "not guilty" and will go to trial in the fall. To date over 100 arrests have been made. The latest arrest occurred on June 15. The blockade continues. If you would like to join you should call the office in Boulder at (303) 443-0887 or write the Rocky Flats Truth Force/ 876 14th St./ Boulder, Colorado 80302

The Church and Redlining

by Frank Cordaro

Recently, the Bishop Drumm Home has announced its intent to move out of our neighborhood and build new in the far north-west section of the city. Bishop Drumm is the only Des Moines area Catholic Senior citizen facility. It will be the second large Catholic institution that has pulled out of the near north side in recent years. Dowling High School moved just eight years ago.

In the last couple of years there has been much talk about "redlining." Redlining is the practice by banks and lending institutions who have picked certain areas in the city as bad business risks and refuse to lend money there for home improvements and home buying. Their predictions often turn out to be self-fulfilling. Any area of town left without money to improve and keep up its existing property will surely decline rapidly. Our Catholic Worker neighborhood is a classic example. The near-north side was once the fashionable side of town, housing some of the most influential people in Des Moines, in large single family units. Today the area is heavily populated by tenants in multiple family dwellings. Most of the old single family dwellings are now broken up into many apartments. There are an unusually large proportion of vacant lots from burned down housing. The neighborhood is inter-racial where before it was strictly white. This in itself is not a disadvantage but the fact that most folks are economically captive residents adds a great deal to the pressure. Both white and black low income folks who have no choice must take what they can get--overcrowded government housing projects or inadequate substandard rental housing. They suffer directly from the naked violence of the many dollar-motivated, quick-return investors who own property here but live in other areas of town. Poor folks find themselves in a never-ending cycle of poor housing conditions getting poorer. It is little wonder that our neighborhood has attracted a "slum" image throughout the city.

The banks and lending institutions have taken a great deal of bad publicity for their part in destroying our neighborhood. Yet they have not done this alone; others have helped. Real estate people and land "lords" (we have only one lord--Jesus Christ) are looking for big bucks. Insurance companies are refusing insure. City and county

policies and programs that ignore poorer areas of town while funding for other projects--the Civic Center, the Botanical Gardens and Mr. Ruan's garage--are also money institutions is that the institution that has most visibly ignored and abandoned our neighborhood has been the Institutional Catholic Church through the pull-out of its local high school and now its planned relocation of its only senior citizen facility. It is understood that a high school is to educate and a senior citizen's home is provide care for the elderly, but institutions do not operate in vacuums, especially when they deal with large amounts of real estate.

Redlining has taught us a great deal. How others use and mis-use their own private property greatly affects the property (and therefore the quality of living) of those around them. There was a time when our neighborhood included three very viable Catholic institutions: Dowling High School, the Bishop Drumm Home and Mercy Hospital. At this time Dowling has moved to the suburbs, leaving behind some partially used, inadequate and deteriorating buildings. Mercy Hospital through its own building efforts and the expanding downtown business district has been cut off from any neighborhood presence it once had. (The closing of the Evelyn Davis Clinic was the neighborhood's last contact with Mercy Hospital). And now Bishop Drumm Home is moving West--leaving behind what?

We who live and work at the Catholic Worker House have come to love this neighborhood. We find the suffering Christ in the broken families and abused women who come to use our houses, many of them from this area. We see first hand the direct effects on human lives of the clean financial decisions of the larger local institutions on our area. We have discovered that the poor in this city suffer most from the personal violence they inflict on each other. We know from our own experience that inadequate physical space has a direct bearing on this violence.

The Gospel is the church's mandate to be kingdom bearers, especially to the poor. The Church is where we are. If we are in West Des Moines, the church is in West Des Moines. If we are in north-west Des Moines, the church continued on p. 20

New York, May 1978: the second covenant of the modern peace movement?

by Jack Smith

(Smith and some thirty other Iowans from six different communities--Des Moines, Dubuque, Davenport, Ames, Iowa City and Decorah--participated in the Mobilization for Survival disarmament activities at the United Nations, Thursday through Saturday, May 25-27.)

Three years and almost one month to the day after the fall of Saigon ended the shooting war in Vietnam, the peace movement in the United States has it all together again.

It happened in New York City when more than 15,000 disarmament advocates marched and rallied in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza as the United Nations began its long awaited special session on disarmament, the first major, world-wide gathering on the subject since 1932. It was the end of May, 1978--Saturday, May 27, to be exact--and the end of the first year of the Mobilization for Survival's effort to awaken a nation to its pending peril at the hands of the arms merchants and the nuclear power proliferators.

The gathering of peace activists in New York City got only second headlines at best. (A Michigan delegate kept tab on the New York Times. Brief, polite coverage began on page 23 on Saturday, and moved to page 29 on Sunday before disappearing entirely.) NATO arms build-up, U.S. warning to Russia over Africa, and weaponry business as usual dominated the front pages. It almost seemed planned.

Media coverage, however, was not the mood determiner for the thousands who came to Manhattan, delegates from many countries besides the U.S., 502 from Japan alone. The delegates brought the mood with them from all parts of the United States and from the foreign lands. It quickly became apparent to most observers that New York City was not going to create a mood or generate a momentum. The gathering in Manhattan was celebrating a mood. It was witnessing what had already begun: a popular movement, a momentum to ban nuclear power entirely.

In the weeks and months to come the wisdom of this on-the-spot insight will be tested.

There will be a major "Sit-In for Survival" at the U.S. mission to the United Nations



on June 12, and at Seabrook, N.H. on June 24, there will be the most ambitious effort yet to physically dramatize mass, popular opposition to the building of a nuclear reactor. The occupation of the tracks at Rocky Flats in Colorado continues amid rumors that the nuclear weapons facility there will be closed or moved to another location. The campaign at Barnwell, South Carolina goes on as nonviolent demonstrators attempt to close Allied General Nuclear Services, a private, commercial plant. And the effort at Bangor, Washington, against the Trident submarine has just begun.

New York itself was an action, at least most who came thought so. While no civil disobedience was planned or executed, the note of direct action--putting one's body on the line; standing up and being counted--was there, even if it was only confronting the New York City traffic. Back in Des Moines, Iowa, and in Dubuque, in Elkhart, Indiana, and in Colorado, for months, money had been saved (even borrowed, in some cases). Resources were pooled and vacation time away from work was moved up to allow continued on p.20

continued from p. 19

for the May visit to New York. This was the cost of peacemaking, 1978, and thousands were willing to pay it.

More telling in creating the upbeat mood of the New York rally were the developments which account for the popular momentum which seemed evident, evident for the first time in a notable way since Vietnam. Two developments in particular: 1) a consensus on the new focal point for the peace movement, and 2) a growing awareness that peace cannot be separated from the economy, especially the U.S. economy.

In the months immediately after the fall of Saigon, on April 30, 1975, there was much uncertainty about the future of the peace movement. Some acted as if the end of the war in Vietnam was the end of the popular movement which forced a president and a government of the U.S. to terminate a tragic, misguided conflict. Others--perhaps a minority--thought the end of the war meant the beginning of the real peace movement--doing the "homework" which had not been possible when immediate anti-war action was top priority; building an institutional base from which to preserve and build upon the lessons Vietnam taught.

By the end of May, 1978, in New York City, the latter view seemed to have carried as delegates from new church justice/peace commissions and centers, and from inner city missions descended upon Manhattan. And something else happened. These new peace groups by a remarkable consensus had hit upon a commonly acceptable focus for their energies: the military-industrial complex and its responsibility for the nuclear and conventional arms race.

Here the delegates acknowledged their indebtedness to Phil and Dan Berrigan and others who early in 1975 insisted that nuclear disarmament was the top priority for the peace movement in the post-war era. All that needed to be discovered was the danger to human life from the so-called peaceful

use of nuclear power and survival was no longer a scare word; it was a frightening possibility for all humankind.

The somewhat less obvious economic connection in all this was a later awareness but it, too, was evident at New York, perhaps no where so evident as in the South Bronx when several hundred foreign delegates and religious leaders led a walk through this "bombed out" part of Manhattan Island.

Surrounded by the visible signs of neighborhood decay and destruction that are South Bronx, it was not hard to believe that nuclear devastation had not already been visited upon the U.S. (A Japanese visitor, walking through an abandoned South Bronx building, came upon the dead body of a person.) The lesson was there for all to see, and the connections: "billions for bombs, but only peanuts for peace and human needs," as one sign put it. (The rest of the sign: "Carter is a Bomb-again Christian.") Or, putting it another way, arms manufacture and the arms race are inseparable parts of the exploitative, humanly destructive American economy. Clearly the system needed more than band-aids.

The United Nations special session on disarmament will continue to the end of June. Judging from today's headlines, the prospect of much success in its avowed purpose are hardly bright. The gap between word and deed of modern heads of state unfortunately widens, and the Trojan horse of contemporary conspiracy--the Cold War--can be trotted out at a moment's notice.

Still, on the people's level, where the peace movement is, the special session on disarmament is already a success. As one Black leader put it, New York is "the second covenant of the modern peace movement in the United States." A fresh, new popular momentum has been created which may not stop until, as the Reverend Sloan Coffin demanded, "the genie of nuclear power has been put back into the bottle."

offices into one facility. Why not the Bishop Drumm Home? Why not sell Bishop Dingman's south of Grand residence towards the purchase of the Bishop Drumm home? The Catholic Worker would gladly offer Bishop Dingman living space until he could relocate near his new offices. We need to remember that sound business practice isn't always good "Kingdom building."

via pacis

ON HOSPITALITY

by Betty Goodnough

In the silent way months have of doing things, June has slipped into town. While all of this has been taking place, Eddie has planted the garden. In spite of the cold, rains, along with brief but apparently adequate appearances of sunshine, have germinated the seeds and now we are welcoming rows of vegetables in the lot across the street. Directly in front of the house are to be bright patches of marigolds and zinnias.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of the male members of our community, accompanied by an able assist from a more experienced carpenter, Dave Howarth, the attic area of Ligutti House has been transformed into a cozy and inviting bunkhouse to be used for staff. Joe and Tim Heller are bedding down there now. Nothing has been said about a housewarming, but we're hopeful.

Not the least of our gratitude extended to Dave, our Jack of all trades, is in appreciation for the broad and handsome concrete walk he poured that now comfortably connects the two houses. After months of balancing precariously, and sometimes painfully, on rocks of various sizes and angles, in winter interspersed with ice and snow, in spring, the alternative to this hazard strips of muddy, slippery boards, this lovely, broad expanse of concrete is a joy to cross. Here in this particular world of making do or going without, one doesn't take lightly a stable and solid sidewalk on which to stride instead of stumble. It is an improvement that lightens the heart.

During a portion of the time Frank and Jacquee were gone, Karen Streng and Nanette Droste, students from Wartburg, came to share the responsibilities of hospitality. We are very indebted to them for all their efforts to care for the needs of our ever changing household. We hope the experience was a rewarding one, and that their summer will be a satisfying and refreshing time.

While always we can count on fifteen "regulars" at least for dinner at night, there does not seem to be the pressure to overcrowd the houses now that milder weather has made its appearance. The Burmese family, who have been with us for two months, are now ready to leave. School for them, too, has come to an end. Everyone,

including Edna, the mother, received good and passing grades. They will now make their way to West Virginia where, through the long term efforts of Jacquee, coupled with her interest and patience, arrangements have been made with the aid of Catholic Workers in that vicinity for interested persons to take this family under their wing and help them make their way to another start in life. Our prayers and hopes for their well-being go with them.

Among our guests just now is Dawn, afflicted with epilepsy, unable to work and without funds, who will remain until a modest check comes which she expects in three weeks' time. We hope to direct her to an agency here in Des Moines that will enter her in a rehabilitation program and, also, will help her in securing financial aid.

Recently I opened a drawer in our pantry and found there, written hastily on a brown paper bag, a farewell message from a 16 year old girl, a runaway, who had spent a brief time at the house: "I already feel helped, just by being here. Thanks for everything. Beth." This gesture of warmth and appreciation came from a girl so upset and in such turmoil from past experiences to which she had been exposed that, when she first arrived, she refused to communicate with anyone, sitting in a chair surrounded by the activity of the living room and seemingly oblivious of everything and everyone. Mostly, when guests leave, we are forced to face the reality that we have had little, if any effect on them, other than to provide needed food and lodging; that in all probability they will never be other than they are, except perhaps to deteriorate; the mold has been cast. It brightened the day and lightened the heart to know that Beth had been able in a measure to respond to us and to the shelter of the house. I think of her often and wish we had been able to do more.

We are glad to welcome the return of Frank and Jacquee to the hospitality of the house and to the community of friends. It seems more normal now that they are about once more, and we hope that their own rooms, the familiarity of the surroundings and our welcome will bring them needed rest and refreshment.

And, now, from this house to yours: Shalom.

June, 1978

continued from p.18

is in north-west Des Moines. If the church is not in the near-north side, it is not with the poor. It is time for a positive financial investment by the institutional Catholic Church in the near north side. It is, in fact, a moral imperative. There is talk of moving the Chancery, Catholic Council for Social Concern, the Catholic Mirror and all other diocesan

Refuse to make war
by Dorothy Day

We say frankly, that we wish indeed the workers would lay down their tools and refuse to make the instruments of death. We wish that they were so convinced of the immorality of modern wars that they would refuse to make the instruments of those wars.

The Holy Father

What about our Holy Father as one of the heroes of the day? Do we wear buttons to remind us of our spiritual leader? Do we hang on his words with breathless interest and greet his every utterance with joy? Do we examine what he says, weigh his words, follow his leadership? Do we meditate on what he has said, do we ponder it prayerfully, do we try to serve under his banner as valient soldiers of Christ? If we did there would be far more pacifists today, far more conscientious objectors.

via pacis

Des Moines Catholic Worker
P.O. Box 4551
Des Moines, Iowa 50306
Telephone: (515) 243-0765

Catholic Worker House
713 Indiana

Msgr. Ligutti House of Hospitality
1301 8th Street

Non-profit organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 22
Des Moines, Iowa